

# The Comets' Tale

*The Official  
Newsletter of the*



**January 2008**

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The Comets' Tale is the official newsletter and record of the Ventura County Comets, AMA Chartered Club #173 and is published monthly at the Comets' Tale Plaza, somewhere in Ventura.

**Editorial contributions are welcome.**

Next Meeting:

Thursday, 17 January, 2007, 7:30 PM at the  
Oak View Community Center



**Coming  
Up!**

**18-20 January, 2008**

Best in the West Jet Rally,  
Coachella Valley, CA

**19, 20 April 2008**

Comets' Float Fly at Lake  
Casitas

**18, 19 October 2007**

Comets' Float Fly, Lake  
Casitas

**1st Sunday of each Month**

First Sunday At the Airport  
Static displays, Young  
Eagle Rides  
Santa Paula Airport

## December Rambling

Happy New Year! I hope that 2008 is a great year with lots of flying and building for those of us who enjoy this hobby. Let's support the Ventura County Comets and our new president Mike Ambarian. The club is only as good as its members. Come out to the field, come to the meetings, and let's support club activities. I hope to have my new Spitfire finished soon and wish the same for all your new projects.

I promised to continue the discussion of counter rotating props I started last month. But first I wanted to include picture 1 which is of a Spitfire Mk 14 of the type I am finishing a model of. As I mentioned last month the 5 blades were needed to absorb the tremendous power (~ 2500 hp) of the Rolls Griffon engine.



Picture 2 shows the Northrop XP-56 flying wing. The counter rotating props were needed to provide ground clearance and minimize torque on this small airplane. This was another configuration that didn't achieve the expected performance benefits.



Northrop XP-56  
R-2800  
Curtiss electric

The Republic XP-72 shown in picture 3 utilized a huge radial engine. I think it was obsolete before it got into the air because of the new jet fighters that were coming into being at this time.



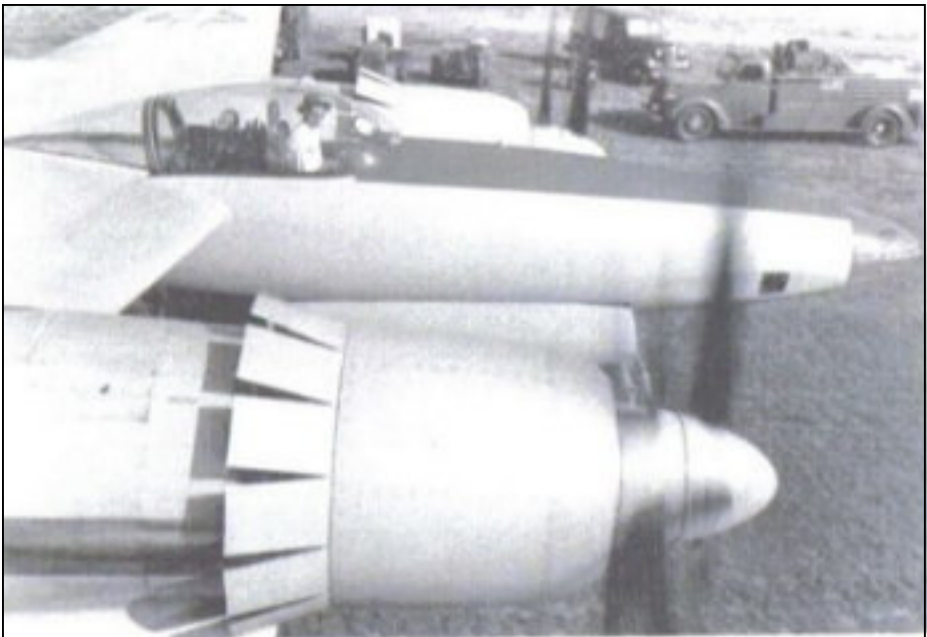
Republic XP-72  
R-4360, Aeroprop

In the early years of WW II there was a fear that if Great Britain fell to Germany a very long range bomber would be needed with a range to fly from the United States to Germany and back. The Northrop XB-35 shown in picture 4 was initiated in 1942 to meet this goal. A jet powered version (XB-49) was also initiated a few years later. These flying wing airplanes were expected to be very efficient but the program ran into continuous development problems. First flight of the XB-35 didn't take place until 1946. Because of ongoing problems with the counter rotating propeller gear boxes single propellers were tried. The performance was cut in half!



Northrop XB-35: R-4360, Hamilton Standard

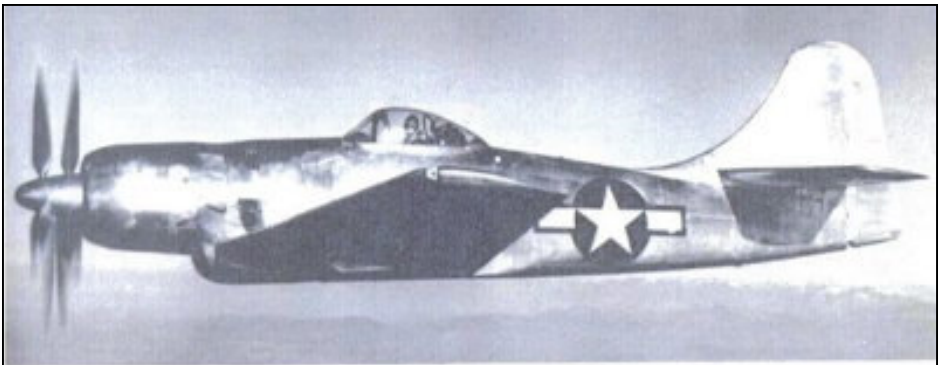
XB-36 testing continued as a research program after the war but with continuing problems. Two of the piston engine powered XB-35's were converted to jet powered XB-49's. The entire program was cancelled and the Convair B-36 became the Air Force's long range bomber. The Air Force wasn't ready for a jet bomber until a few years later when the Boeing B-47 came into being.



5

**Hughes XF-11: R-4360, Hamilton Standard**

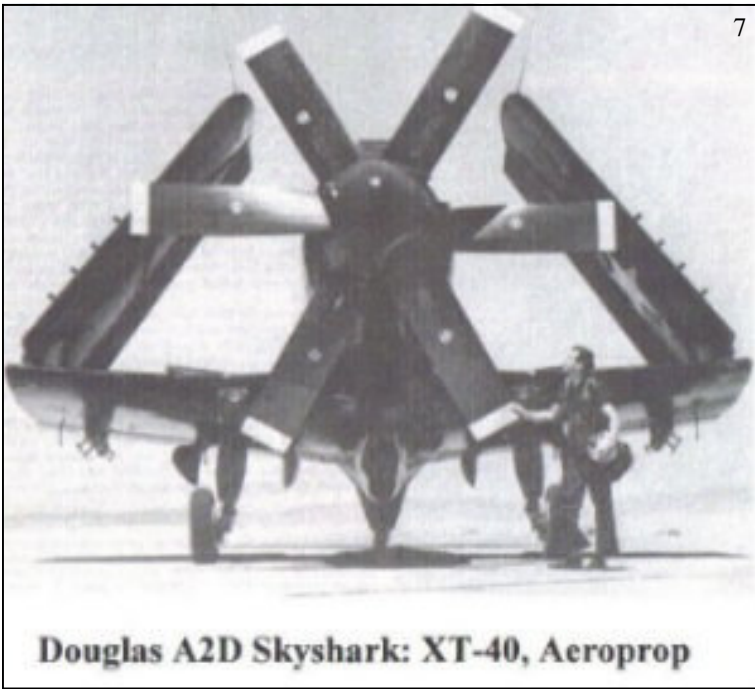
The Hughes XF-11 shown in picture 5 was an attempt to design a large long range fighter. Although not successful the large model of it looked great in the recent movie about Howard Hughes.



6

**Boeing XF8B-1: R-4360, Aeroprop**

Another fighter of this era is shown in picture 6. The Boeing XF8B-1 looks a lot like the airplane in picture 3. My guess is they were probably designed to the same Air Force request.



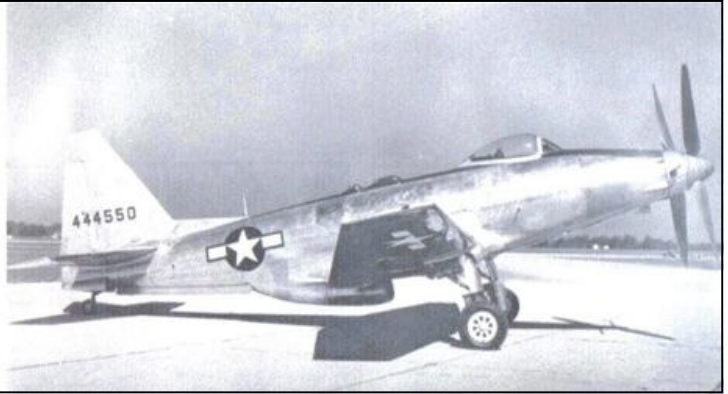
7

**Douglas A2D Skyshark: XT-40, Aeroprop**

Look at the size of the propellers on the airplane in picture 7. This was a Douglas A2D Skyshark.

8

Fisher XP-75 Eagle  
V-3420, Aeroquip



I hadn't heard of the Fisher XP-75 Eagle shown in picture 8 so I looked it up. Wikipedia (internet free encyclopedia) says: Designed by the Fisher Body Division of General Motors Corporation to meet the 1942 requirement for extremely high rate of climb. It used the most powerful liquid-cooled engine available, the Allison V-3420 (essentially a pair of 12 cylinder engines mated to a common crankcase!). The concept was to use outer wing panels from the P-51 Mustang, the tail from the Douglas A-24 (SBD), and undercarriage from the F4U Corsair with the engine amidships and propeller driven through an extension shaft as on the P-39. In the early design stage P-40 Warhawk wing panels were substituted.

Two prototypes were ordered. In mid 1943 long range became more urgent than climb rate. Six more XP-75 airplanes were ordered modified for long range. A production order for 2500 P-75A was also let. First XP-75 prototype aircraft flight was November 1943. After correcting many problems the first production P-75A flew in September 1944. By this time the P-47N Thunderbolt and P-51D Mustang had excellent long-range capabilities, so in October the Army Air Force decided to limit the number of combat aircraft types and the program was terminated. There was one unrestored XP-75 at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in 1998. Pictures 8a and 8b show the airplanes status in 1998. I visited this museum last summer and the XP-75 was not on display and it is not listed in there book about the museum.

8a



Photo by Phil Callihan/AIRPOWER.CALLIHAN.CC

8b



Photo by Phil Callihan/AIRPOWER.CALLIHAN.CC



9

**Levitz/Rogers P-51R  
Griffon, de Havilland**

The Reno Air Races have resulted in some highly modified warplane racers. Picture 9 shows a Griffon powered P-51R with counter rotating propellers.



10

**Fairy Gannet Anti Submarine Aircraft  
Armstrong Siddeley Double Mamba  
Turboshaft Engines, 3035 hp total  
Independently Controlled 4 blade Rotol  
Contra-Rotating Propellers**

Picture 10 represents what might be required when utilizing more horsepower. This is an English Fairy Gannet anti submarine aircraft with 4 blade contra-rotating propellers.

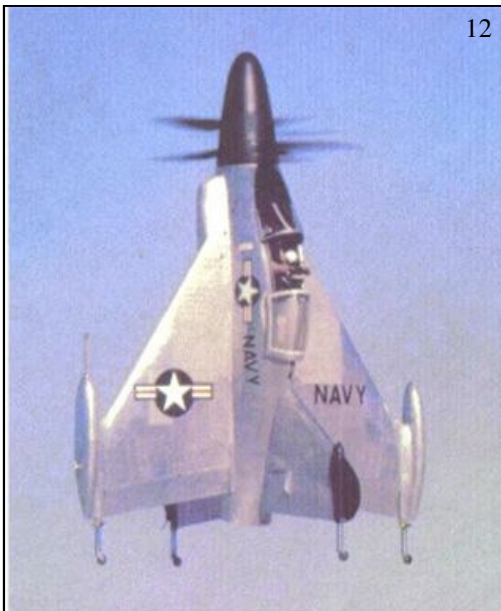


11

**Westland Wyvern S.4  
Armstrong Siddeley Python  
A.S.P.3, 4110 hp  
Rotol**

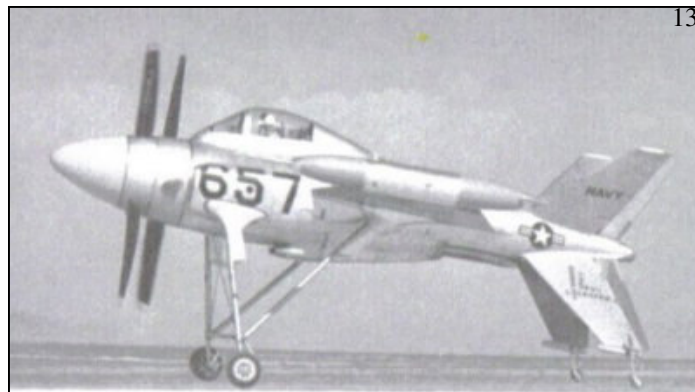
The Westland Wyvern S.4 shown in picture 11 has a 4110 hp Armstrong Siddeley Python engine. I have seen plans for an r/c scale model of this airplane.

The airplanes in pictures 12 and 13 are the result of another military program which didn't work out. With the new high power engines becoming available near the end of the war an attempt was made to develop an airplane that didn't need an airstrip for operation. It had to be capable of taking off and landing vertically.



12

**Convair XFY-1  
YT-40, Curtiss electric**



13

**Lockheed XFV-1  
YT-40, Curtiss electric**

The Convair XFY-1 in picture 12 did make vertical take offs and landings, but it was almost impossible to land. The pilot was lying on his back and couldn't see in this mode. The Lockheed XFV-1 in picture 13 flew on the special landing gear shown, but never achieved vertical take-offs or landings.

A completely different type airplane, the Bristol Brabazon, is shown in picture 14. This is another airplane that was overtaken by the jet age.



**Bristol Brabazon: Coupled Centaurus, Rotol**

The Saunders-Roe Princess flying boat shown in picture 15 was started when there weren't many airports for large transport aircraft. After the war there were runways all over the world and no reason to fly a transport that had the drag penalties associated with operation from the water.



**Saunders-Roe Princess Coupled Proteus, Rotol**

The Convair R3Y-1 Tradewind flying boat shown in picture 16 had a short career in the US Navy.



**Convair R3Y-1 Tradewind: T-40, AeroPROP**

The USSR standard bomber/transport for many years was the TU 95-Bear/TU-144 transport as shown in picture 17. The size and performance of this turbo prop airplane is impressive. The final picture in this discussion of airplanes with counter rotating propellers is shown in picture 18. This Antonov-70 transport with Progress bureau D-27 turboshaft engines has more prop blades than any airplane I've ever heard of. How would you like to make a scale this model and include scale props?



*Bob Root*

**RENEWAL NOTICE 2008**  
**Ventura County Comets**  
**Dues Payable on or before January 1, 2008**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

AMA Number \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

R/C Frequency Channel \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership: Senior \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Renewal Fee: Senior \$50, Spouse \$25, Junior 17 yrs. and younger \$10**  
**Please include a copy of your 2008 AMA membership card**

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## Before the Wright Brothers, There Was Gustave

source: [gustavewhitehead.com](http://gustavewhitehead.com)

1901: Gustave Whitehead purportedly travels a mile and a half in the air aboard his birdlike monoplane. If he did, that means he flew nearly two-and-a-half-years before the Wright brothers' celebrated flight at Kitty Hawk.

There is evidence that several aviators on both sides of the Atlantic preceded Orville and Wilbur Wright into manned, heavier-than-air flight, although Whitehead's claim appears to be the best documented.

That few people outside of aviation buffs have ever heard of Whitehead—originally “Weisskopf” before he immigrated to America from Germany—can be attributed to several factors including, Whitehead defenders say, the outright refusal of the Smithsonian Institute to even consider the possibility that anyone beat the Wright brothers into the air.

Nevertheless, that's exactly what he appears to have done. Although there is affidavit supporting Whitehead's claim to make a bona fide flight as early as April 1899 (filed by an assistant who said he was scalded by steam from the aircraft's motor,) his August ascent was the first one clearly documented and witnessed by people not associated with the project.

The aircraft used for the August 14 flight was named Number 21, since Whitehead rather unromantically christened his experimental craft in numerical order. Number 21 was built with bamboo ribbing and covered in silk. (Number 22, which would fly the following January, substituted steel tubing for bamboo.)

Four flights were reportedly made that day, the first coming before daybreak. Three others followed in the afternoon, including a mile-and-a-half journey where Whitehead reached an altitude of 200 feet. In contrast, the Wright's historic first flight in 1903 lasted a mere 12 seconds while traveling 120 feet. Q